

CAPE COD NATIONAL SEASHORE DUNE SHACK SUBCOMMITTEE FINDINGS JANUARY 2003

BACKGROUND

In 1990, the Dune Shack Subcommittee of the Cape Cod National Seashore Park's Advisory Commission was formed to draft a philosophy of Use for consideration by the commission.

In May of 1992, following a series of meetings, the sub-committee offered a philosophy of use and a series of guidelines to the Commission. Not long thereafter, the Advisory Commission adopted the subcommittee's language and referred it to the Seashore superintendent.

The Dune Shack Subcommittee remained in a semi-dormant status from then until mid-2001 when it was reactivated in response to request's for guidance from Seashore superintendent Maria Burks. The Superintendent's request for the Advisory Commission's guidance or suggestions is attached as Appendix A.

As reconvened, the members were:

Richard Philbrick, chairman — Orleans representative to the Advisory Commission

William Hammatt — Chatham representative to the Advisory Commission

Alix Ritchie — Provincetown representative to the Advisory Commission

Hatty Fitts, Laurel Guadazno, Marian Roth, Lisa Sette, Tom Boland — Provincetown

Joyce Johnson — Truro-Eastham

Sue Moynihan, National Park Service

William Burke, National Park Service

PREFACE TO FINDINGS

The subcommittee met nine times over the past 15 months.

Thinking in a general sense of our discussions and deliberation, we see the purpose of our dune shack role as keeping alive a practice of the past that still has unique value to contemporary, and hopefully future, society.

Put another way, it is less like saving an historic building such as the Adams House in Quincy, or reenacting the 1775 muster in Concord, but more in keeping a wild creature or any living entity from going extinct.

OUR FINDINGS

1. Reviewing the 1992 report of the previous subcommittee, we find the “Philosophy of Use” statement from the first page of that report to be still valid and in need of only minor tweaking. But some of its accompanying guidance has lost relevance for two reasons:
- 2 . We find private non-profit organizations such as the Peaked Hill Trust to be suitable for managing public access to shacks while protecting and preserving both structures and the habitat.
3. The 15 questions posed to us by the Seashore were answered and are incorporated herein as an inherent part of this report as Appendix B. 4. We find that the current level of usage of shacks for the “Artist in Residence” program is about right, with the possibility of an additional shack for a “writers in residence” program.
4. We find that the current level of usage of shacks for the “Artist in Residence” program is about right, with the possibility of an additional shack for a “writers in residence” program.
5. We find that restoration of destroyed or damaged shacks is consistent with their history and should be carried out in the manner that would have applied previously, rather than precise replication. Generation of a restoration master plan may be useful for matters of style or standards of practice, but such plans should not be allowed to require slavish adherence.
6. We find that this subcommittee’s role as a channel into the local community, particularly into the local art colony and the local colonies of drama, literature and creativity wherever, may be its most important function.
7. We find that any expectation that the Advisory Commission can come up with guidance that will settle these matters “once and for all” is probably wrong and that a sense of flux should exist that would allow for changing times and minds. We feel this would be possible if there is on-going dialogue between the Seashore and the community, made possible by the subcommittee’s role.

APPENDIX A

Charge to the Cape Cod National Seashore Advisory Commission Dune Shack Subcommittee Cape Cod National Seashore August 2001

The *Dune Shacks of the Peaked Hill Bars Historic District* was determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places in May of 1989. The Keeper of the Register found “significant associations of the dune cottages with the historic development of American art, literature and theater.” They have further significance as structures conveying continued “use of the dunes’ seaside setting over time.” This use extends from the several fishermen’s huts over 150 years ago to the dune shacks of the present time, embodying a continuous legacy, both social and cultural.

In 2001 the Historic District consists of eighteen dune shacks, seventeen of which are owned by the National Park Service and are utilized by various individuals and groups through a mix of management tools, such as leases, annual special use permits, cooperative agreements and reservations of use and occupancy. Several reservations are for the life of the reservation holder, while others expire in 2005, 2014 and 2016. Leases for three of the dune shacks expire in 2009, 2014, and 2019.

Cape Cod National Seashore requests that the Cape Cod National Seashore Advisory Commission, through its Dune Shack Subcommittee, assist the seashore in defining future uses of the Historic District to ensure that:

1. the dune shacks and the dune landscape surrounding them will be preserved;
2. human use that reflects and is compatible with the qualities for which the District was found eligible will continue and that the public will have access to the qualities and themes represented by the district.

In the past the subcommittee has been asked to provide similar guidance. However, there have been some significant changes since the subcommittee was last convened that warrant a fresh look.

1. In 1998 Cape Cod National Seashore completed its General Management Plan. The GMP includes specific recommendations regarding the Historic District.
2. There are new or modified options that may be employed in the management of the dune shacks. These include General Agreement, Historic Lease Concession, and Historic Property Leasing.
3. The passing of holders of reservation of use and occupancy and the expiration of other reservations in 2005 will bring the total number of shacks managed by the National Park Service to 10. Decisions that are made during the next several years will have a significant impact on the Historic District. What will successful preservation, use, and management of the district look like in 20 years?
4. As a unit of the National Park System, Cape Cod National Seashore is a part of our national legacy. Its “ownership” extends beyond park boundaries. How does this relate to dune shack management and use?

The “Philosophy of Use” presented by the Dune Shack Subcommittee in May of 1992 remains relevant today, nearly 10 years later. We are at a crucial junction that now requires specific guidance on dune shack use, management, and preservation. We are asking the subcommittee to assist by addressing the following questions:

1. What shacks have the most significant ties to the National Register eligibility?
2. Recognizing the relationship between the development of the arts and dune shacks, what kinds and levels of artistic endeavors should take place?

3. Considering past traditional use, is use by one group or individual for an entire summer appropriate?
4. Recognizing that the dune shacks are part of our national heritage preserved by the National Park Service, how should the general public have access to the dune shacks and the themes they represent?
5. If the National Park Service were to retain use of one or two dune shacks for administrative purposes (ie. research opportunities, opportunity to utilize dune shack for focused and uninterrupted work, etc) and maintain the shack(s) which shacks would be most appropriate?
6. How can constituency for the historic district be increased?
7. Are there uses that are unacceptable or violate the spirit of the district?
8. How important is continuity of use? For example, is it important to allow individual(s) to live in dune shacks on a long-term basis?
9. In the past, how often did dune shacks change hands? How was it done?
10. Are long-term leases a viable option for preserving shacks? Is it an appropriate use?
11. Expanding upon past use of the dune shacks as havens for writers and artists, is there value to expanding use to include scientific explorations, scientific writing, and natural history observation?
12. What is the perception of the value of the current artist-in-residency program? Should it be expanded? Should it be refined?
13. Is it compatible with past use and is it appropriate to designate a shack or shacks for transient overnight use by the visiting public? If so, what restrictions would be recommended?
14. What is/are the greatest challenges facing the district? How can it/they be resolved?
15. Evaluate the current uses of long-term lease, lifetime occupancy, artist-in-residence programs, overnight stays by members of specific groups (ie. Thalassa and Euphoria), annual special use permit (ie. Braaten) and describe advantages and disadvantages to each in terms of ability to preserve the dune shacks, appropriateness of use, and accessibility to the general public.

APPENDIX B

1. Q: What shacks have the most significant ties to the National Register eligibility?

Ans: ALL the shacks have significant ties to the National Register eligibility which states that their “use” is the significant element in their history and their future.

2. Q: Recognizing the relationship between the development of the arts and dune shacks, what kinds and levels of artistic endeavors should take place?

Ans: The word “artistic” should be replaced with “creative and cultural.” We do not recommend putting limits on creative efforts.

3. Q: Considering past traditional use, is use by one group or individual for an entire summer appropriate?

Ans: NO, unless that group or individual is also the one responsible for care and maintenance - it wouldn't work, for instance, for the park to set up such short term uses unless they want to be in direct control of the maintenance.

4. Q. Recognizing that the dune shacks are part of our national heritage preserved by the National Park Service, how should the general public have access to the dune shacks and the themes they represent?

Ans: We suggest changing word “themes” to “solitude.” There could be a multi-faceted approach, such as:

- a) Non-profit organizations running use programs such as Peaked Hill Trust, C-Scape, and OCARC are doing now;
- b) Dune rides, such as being run now by Art's Dune Taxi (that include a spiel about the history of the shacks);
- c) Ranger tours, such as the one to the C-Scape;
- d) Exhibitions, readings and slide shows with the Park perhaps designating special space for on-going exhibits;
- e) Wayside exhibits at a couple of the entrances to the dunes - say Race Point and Snail Road, at foot of trail or top of hill where one can look over the dunes to some of the shacks;
- f) Invite class room groups out for study days, using a shack as headquarters;
- g) Publications such as writing up a history of the shacks and their occupants over time.

5. Q: If the National Park Service were to retain use of one or two dune shacks for administrative purposes (i.e. research opportunities, uninterrupted work time, etc.) and maintain the shack(s), which shacks would be most appropriate?

Ans: One of the ones that is more like a house than a “shack” and can be heated, such as Fowlers.

6. Q: How can constituency for the historic district be increased?

Ans: See answers in No. 4, especially use by non-profit organizations such as the artist-in-residency programs.

7. Q: Are there uses that are unacceptable or violate the spirit of the district?

Ans: YES - see Page 2, paragraph 2 of the 1992 report by the Dune Shack subcommittee. Also large, noisy parties should be avoided.

8. Q: How important is continuity of use? For example, is it important to allow individual(s) to live in dune shacks on a long-term basis?

Ans: Continuity results in its own “history” which has been so significant in the dune district. If one is to live long-term, than it should be accompanied by the requirement of long-term maintenance by that person or group.

9. Q: In the past, how often did dune shacks change hands? How was it done?

Ans: Most shacks have had long term tenancy and “ownership” — about 40 years or more. Some paid a nominal price for the shack, others just passed them along to family or close friends on an informal basis.

10. Q: Are long-term leases a viable option for preserving shacks? Is it an appropriate use?

Ans. Yes, for both non-profit groups and individuals.

11. Q: Expanding upon past use of the dune shacks as havens for writers and artists, is there value to expanding use to include scientific explorations, scientific writing, and natural history observations?

Ans: Yes - and there is already a history of this kind of activity so it would not be expanding so much as being sure this continues.

12. Q: What is the perception of the value of the current artist-in-residency program? Should it be expanded? Should it be refined?

Ans: It is considered of great value. It would be appropriate, perhaps, to expand the C-Scape program to have a shack for literary/scientific purposes, although this is not really an “historic” use. One refinement might be to have an on-going exhibition space somewhere in the Park related to the shacks. (See No. 4)

13. Q: Is it compatible with past use and is it appropriate to designate a shack or shacks for transient overnight use by the visiting public? If so, what restrictions would be recommended?

Ans: No - an overnight in a shack is not like hopping into a motel. Each person using a shack needs orientation to dune shack living by some experienced shack dweller. It would not be feasible on an overnight basis. The committee also feels a one week stay should be minimum to keep down the vehicle traffic, and thus the wear and tear on the dunes.

14. Q: What is/are the greatest challenges facing the district? How can they be resolved?

Ans: Consistent management is prime, to be accompanied by distinct standards for replacing, restoring, moving, etc. A spirit of co-operation between the Park and users is also paramount.

15. Q: Evaluate the current uses of long-term lease, lifetime occupancy, artist-in-residence programs, overnight stays by members of specific groups, annual special use permits, and describe advantages and disadvantages to each in terms of ability to preserve the dune shacks, appropriateness of use and accessibility to the general public.

Ans: The committee feels that the current uses are appropriate and do serve the general public as best as possible considering the limited resource, i.e. not enough shacks for the demand.

APPENDIX C

SOME ADDITIONAL GUIDING PRINCIPLES that came out of the subcommittee deliberations and represent the sense of the group:

The subcommittee feels it should put in writing some specific principles and notions, that have evolved from its discussions, for possible consideration in determining how shacks should be used:

- (1) Absolute key to any use of the dune shacks is the experience of solitude
- (2) That there be a balance in the constituency: long term, seasonal, organizations like Peaked Hill Trust, families or individuals with long term ties to the local community or to the shacks. Use should include visual, written and musical arts or science among others.
3. That maintenance is a key element in any use agreement
4. That the shacks are historical by their use not their construction
5. That the Seashore review its policy regarding the number of dune taxis allowed in the dune shack area at one time
6. That the Seashore do a survey of the shacks including measurements, dates when constructed, site plan specifications, photographs (both current and historic) as well as documentation as to who resided in the shacks. But see the cautionary note in Finding 5.
7. That the Seashore retain use of a shack for its staff, for dune orientation, research, etc.
8. That “long term use” and “Short Term use” be clearly defined.
9. That the policy that all shacks must go out to bid be reconsidered in very special cases, such as the Kemp/Tasha shack.
10. That a “shack preservation” plan be defined to address replacement/moving standards when erosion, rot, wind destruction, etc. occur.